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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: September 01, 2009

Media Reaction Summary: September 01, 2009

Summary: Reports on national political developments dominated front pages in all newspapers on Tuesday. All newspapers highlighted reports that the "government increased the prices of petroleum products." Reports that the U.S. Commander in Afghanistan General McChrystal "called for a revised strategy to defeat the Taliban and reverse the Afghanistan's 'serious' situation" received prominent coverage in several dailies. Reports on the "re-opening of the Pak-Afghan border at Chaman for traffic" were also highlighted.

Most major newspapers ran editorials on a host of subjects including the recent suicide attack in Mingora, the alleged alteration of Harpoon missiles by Pakistan, the autonomy of the Northern Areas, and the freedom of Dr. Khan etc. In its editorial on the "Mingora attack" the prestigious English language daily, "Dawn," noted that the "latest attack also sends a message that if members of the police are vulnerable inside their own facilities, then nobody on the outside is safe." The populist, often sensational national English daily "The News," observed that the "myth that the Taliban are invincible will be resurrected and this will make the task of inflicting a final defeat on them all the harder." The second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" raised a question that "is it a given that only Taliban are active in Swat and other terrorism hit areas, especially when American media has provided evidence of Indian and Israeli involvement in these areas?" End Summary.

News Stories

"Prices Of Petroleum Products Raised" "Dawn" (09/01)

"Prices of petroleum products have been raised by eight per cent for the month of September because of an increase in oil prices in the international markets."

"Afghanistan Situation 'Serious': Mcchrystal" "Daily Times" (09/01)

"The US and NATO commander in Afghanistan on Monday submitted a review into the nearly eight-year war, calling for a revised strategy to defeat the Taliban and reverse the country's 'serious' situation. 'The situation in Afghanistan is serious but success is achievable and demands a revised implementation strategy, commitment and resolve, and increased unity of effort,' said McChrystal in a statement."

"Pak-Afghan border opens at Chaman" "The News" (09/01)

"The Pakistan-Afghanistan border was opened in Chaman on Monday. Earlier, a trailer driver was killed but local authorities, assisted by police and security forces, early on Monday succeeded in overcoming a fire that destroyed over a dozen vehicles on the border here."

"Supplies For Nato Forces Resume" "Dawn" (09/01)

Normal traffic on the Chaman-Kandahar highway and supplies for Nato forces in Afghanistan, suspended after bomb attacks on Saturday and Sunday, were restored on Monday."

"Beg Smells Rat In US Embassy Expansion" "The News" (09/01)

"Former Cief of Army Staff Gen(R) Mirza Aslam Beg has said that the land acquisition under the pretext of embassy for a spy network will create many troubles for the country and the nation would never pardon those becoming bridge to complete this anti-state agenda."

"Blackwater Presence Annoys Peshawarites" "The News" (09/01)

"While citizens and political parties have started protesting against the reported presence and activities of Blackwater, now renamed Xe Services LLC, in Peshawar and other places in Pakistan, very few know about the operations and history of the private security firm that supported the US government in its so-called war on terror. Though the American and Pakistani authorities have denied the presence of Blackwater or Xe, there have been growing concerns among the public and political ranks over reports of the arrival of a large number of private security guards from USA to Pakistan."

"PTI Voices Concern Over Activities Of U.S. Agency" "The News" (09/01)

"The Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) has expressed concern over the increasing activities of the American private security company, Blackwater, in Pakistan and termed it a conspiracy against the integrity and solidarity of the country."

"36 More Bodies Found In Swat" "The News" (09/01)

"As many as 36 bodies, believed to be of militants, were found dumped in various locations of the valley while 16 suspected Taliban, including two foreign nationals, were arrested during search operations on Monday. Official sources said 30 bullet-riddled bodies were found dumped in Manglawar and Banjot areas while the body of another militant identified as Bacha Rahman was recovered from Nawagai area in Barikot."

"45 Militants Killed" "Dawn" (09/01)

"Forty-five militants were killed and 27 arrested during security operations in Swat valley on Sunday and Monday. The ongoing operations were intensified in Taligram, Baish Banar, Banjot and adjoining areas of Manglawar immediately after Sunday's suicide attack on a police training centre in Mingora."

"Militants Clash In Orakzai Kills Three" "The News" (09/01)

"Three militants were killed when two groups of Taliban exchanged fire in Ferozkhel area of Orakzai Agency on Monday."

"Musharraf, Two PPP Ministers Summoned In Benazir Case" "Dawn" (09/01)

"Justice Ijaz Ahmed Chaudhry of the Lahore High Court issued on Monday notices to Gen (retd) Pervez Musharraf, Interior Minister Rehman Malik, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Babar Awan, former Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and 12 others for Sept 28 on an application seeking registration of an FIR against them for their alleged involvement in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto."

"Verdict On Aafia's Plea Reserved" "Dawn" (09/01)

"The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday reserved its verdict on a petition filed against release of \$2 million to three American lawyers for defending Dr Aafia Siddiqui in United States courts."

"Brig Imtiaz Reveals CIA Plots" "The News" (09/01)

"Former spymaster Brigadier (ret'd) Imtiaz Ahmad, whose recent statements caused ripples in the country's political arena, now talks of a much serious issue Pakistan's nuclear programme. He claims to have foiled two American CIA plots to sabotage the country's nuclear programme."

"USAID Closes Islamabad Offices Over Security Threat" "Daily Times" (09/01)

"US authorities have closed all USAID offices in Islamabad after receiving threats from unidentified miscreants, a private TV channel reported on Monday."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Mingora Attack," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (09/01)

". . . The latest attack also sends a message that if members of the police are vulnerable inside their own facilities, then nobody on the outside is safe. A 'decisive offensive' against the South Waziristan Taliban is now said to be on the cards. Though a welcome move it is fraught with danger, and not just on the battlefield. A military operation there could produce a backlash in the form of even more suicide attacks, with the security apparatus the most likely target. While it may be impossible to eliminate such bombings altogether, it is incumbent on the state to minimize their incidence."

"Mingora Mayhem," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/01)

"The suicide attack in Mingora, days after a similar attack on security forces in Khyber Agency, goes to confirm fears that the Taliban are anxious to show that they are not a defeated force. Indeed, their new young commander will be eager to demonstrate he is no less ruthless and no less effective than his predecessor.... The Taliban for the present remain a group that is largely intact. . . If there are too many suicide bombings in the coming months, the myth that the Taliban are invincible will be resurrected and this will make the task of inflicting a final defeat on them all the harder."

"Suicide Attack In Mingora: Need For Ceasefire," an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (09/01)

"Is it a given that only Taliban are active in Swat and other terrorism hit areas, especially when American media has provided evidence of Indian and Israeli involvement in these areas.... Dialogue is the only solution to the problem. The government should initiate ceasefire in order to have a clue of the secret hand that is implementing its conspiracies in the garb of Taliban."

"Mingora Attack Result Of Security Failure," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (09/01)

"After the declaration of the success of military operation, the Malakand division witnessed relative calm which gave rise to a myth that the backbone of the terrorists has been broken rendering them unable to launch suicide attacks anymore. But the Monday's suicide blast on Mingora Special Police Training Center has confirmed that the extremists are still in a position to hit a target of their choice. In fact, our law enforcers habitually soften the strict security arrangements after claims of minor successes in the war against terrorism. The Mingora tragedy was also an outcome of security lapse."

"Fourth Attack On The Mingora Police School," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (09/01)

"As stated earlier, this was the fourth attack on the Mingora Police training School. The authorities must be asked: why were earlier security lapses not taken note of. It is due to the poor security

arrangements [at the school] that terrorists were able to carry out such an attack easily. While it is true that the brave sons of the soil are ready to lay down their lives for the country, these precious lives can be safeguarded with just a little more attention to their security."

"Mingora Blast: Uprooting Extremism Is Imperative," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (09/01)

"The war [on terror] can be won in real terms only when the people also cooperate with the government in uprooting extremism. Although several extremists have been captured after being identified by the public, more work needs to be done in this respect as the local people have better knowledge of the extremists [whereabouts] than the army. We hope this will happen soon and extremism will be eliminated completely."

"Suicide Attacks in Peshawar And Mingora," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (09/01)

"God knows what will be the outcome of the Taliban attacks. If we look at Iraq we see that nothing positive came out of suicide attacks in that country. Contrary to the expectations of the terrorists over there, security forces are doing their duties. The terrorists in Pakistan will also be disappointed."

"Bad Security Of Security Personnel," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (09/01)

". . . The terrorists must have developed a reflex by now: don't think much, change nothing in the plans, just go and attack security personnel when they are out in the open, drilling or opening fast. . . The police is the biggest sitting duck in the country."
"The Taliban After Baitullah," an op-ed by Mushfiq Murshed in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/01)

"Baitullah Mehsud's death after the drone attack of August 5 has definitely weakened the Taliban movement. Intelligence, implementation of preemptive measures and a strong military offence has turned the tide in our favour. Yet, the war is far from over. The new Taliban leadership should not be underestimated. The military option, although essential, must not be the only strategy that the current administration should be relying on. Socio-economic relief is as essential as military might. In the end it will be the mood of the people that will sway the outcome of this war."

"American Mischief Of Bringing Pakistan To The Level Of Afghanistan," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (09/01)

"For development in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Obama administration is finalizing a strategic implementation plan under nine comprehensive objectives to measure the two countries progress. America will review the performance of Pakistan and Afghanistan in the light of this comprehensive document.... This is the proof of our rulers' and planners' incompetence, greed for power, weakness and disregard for national interests and priorities that America is treating a nuclear state, Pakistan at par with Afghanistan.... By steering both the countries in similar manner, it is being proved that like Afghanistan Pakistan too is under American occupation.... America has acquired 200 homes for its operatives in Islamabad and Blackwater operatives have been given tasks in Islamabad, Peshawar and other cities and villages. The entire nation has expressed concern over these developments.... America is pushing itself to the fate it met in Iran in 1979. The government should clarify its position vis-à-vis the press report [NY Times] about the strategic implementation plan."

"Slapping The Wrist That Feeds You," an op-ed by Mosharraf Zaidi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/01)

"This past week, the government of Pakistan decided to tell the American government and its foreign aid arm, USAID, to cut down on administrative costs in the execution of its development programs. . . Perhaps this is the kind of stand-up Pakistani machismo that

Pakistan's hyper-nationalists have in mind when they plea, on a weekly basis, for more backbone on the Pakistani side, in the ever complex U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Shouting down the next visiting U.S. diplomat for how USAID operates might be sexy for the old school folks at the GHQ, but like so many other things at the GHQ, it would be borne of the lethal cocktail of naivet, ignorance and arrogance that tend to be in such large supply there. . . Pakistan is not underdeveloped because of foreign aid and its inherent contradictions and inefficiencies. It is underdeveloped because of Pakistan's own inherent contradictions, and believe it or not, because of Pakistan's own inefficiencies"

"Modifying Missiles," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/01)

"The New York Times' accusation that Pakistan is illegally modifying US-made missiles to make them capable of striking land targets and thus creating a new threat for India was met with a firm rebuttal by Islamabad. . . The accusation comes at a particularly delicate time when the Administration is asking Congress to approve \$7.5 billion in aid to Islamabad over the next five years. . . The whole issue was based on a suspicion. President Obama and his Administration can be easily misled if they continue to make wrong inferences or believe flawed intelligence. . . It's time Washington paid heed to saner counsel and extended an all-out support to Islamabad for effectively combating the growing menace of terrorism rather than doing things that could undermine mutual relations."

"The US Afghanistan Policy," an op-ed by Javid Hussain in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/01)

". . . The US Afghanistan policy continues to suffer from serious shortcomings which have the potential to derail it and lead to its ultimate defeat. . . Ideally, the US, while continuing the fight against Al-Qaeda to overcome international terrorism, should open lines of communications with the Pushtun tribes and the moderate elements among the Taliban as well as other ethnic communities in Afghanistan with a view to evolving a new political dispensation in the country which is acceptable to all of them. It would also be necessary to have the endorsement of Afghanistan's neighbours, especially Pakistan and Iran, for the new political dispensation to restore durable peace in the country. Until this is done, the armed in Afghanistan will continue with its ebbs and flows, and peace in Afghanistan will remain an elusive goal."
Patterson